

Press Release

**June 13, 2006**

## **SCHAKOWSKY CALLS FOR CONTRACTOR ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **Returns to Subcommittee on National Security to press for transparency and oversight**

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky, a former member of the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, returned to the Subcommittee today to participate in a hearing on private military contractors. Schakowsky called on the Subcommittee to provide more oversight for private contractors, which the U.S. government has increasingly relied on for use in military operations. Schakowsky sponsored an amendment that was attached to the FY07 Defense Authorization bill, which would require an Inspector General report on contractor overcharges, establish a background check system for foreign nationals hired for work on US contracts, prevent contractors from hiring felons and human rights abusers, make retroactive 2005 contractor rules so that they cover all active contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and require sufficient contractor oversight officers to review contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Schakowsky's statement in today's Subcommittee hearing is below:

Over the past decade, private military contractors, or PMCs, have become a key factor in U.S. military operations. U.S. military logistics, combat assistance, and security services are increasingly outsourced to private entities. Civilians have taken on many of the responsibilities and duties once performed exclusively by uniformed personnel. As a result, today advancement of key U.S. foreign policy goals relies far more on private, non-state actors than at any time in American history.

Regulating the responsibilities and accountability of private actors on the international stage is one of the most important policy challenges that the Congress needs to address in regards to our foreign policy. Yet, while the PMC trend is having a profound impact on the planning and conduct of modern warfare, there has been almost no scrutiny and even less oversight in regulating the U.S. - PMC relationship.

In fact, when I offered an amendment to the FY07 Defense Authorization bill that would help provide better Congressional oversight on military contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan the Republican majority refused to allow me to include language asking for the number of contracts in existence, the total cost of these contracts, the total number of contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan, the number of dead and wounded contractors, a report on the laws that had been broken by contractors, a list of disciplinary actions taken against contractors, and they would not allow Congress to receive copies of contracts issued in excess of \$100 million dollars.

The Bush Administration's support for the privatization of government functions, coupled with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, has accelerated the demands for private security services. Contractors compose the second largest force in Iraq after the U.S. military. And to date, more military contractors have been killed in Iraq than non-US "coalition" soldiers. We can all acknowledge that military contractors require the same stringent accountability and oversight standards as the U.S. military. After all, private contractors often serve side by side with our brave troops, and these same United States troops are often tasked to protect our contractors, who are paid with billions of US taxpayer dollars.

Several high profile scandals have exposed the challenges we face with PMCs. Contractors have been implicated in financial, legal, and human rights abuses, including illicit trade, drugs, prostitution rings, allegations of fraud, human rights abuses and worst of all, unprovoked civilian deaths. These events have highlighted the challenges that arise when non-state actors are employed in active war zones and are not sufficiently regulated or when enforcement of existing laws remains weak.

The private military contractor business is the war business, and for-profit companies do not share the same mission-based goals as the US military. They are in business for profit. As the Iraq experience makes clear, a more transparent framework for monitoring and regulation of contractors is urgently needed.